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Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

Summary

The present report contains resolutions and decisions adopted at the recent sessions of the regional commissions in the first half of 2001, during which four of the five regional commissions held their regular sessions: the Economic Commission for Europe held its fifty-sixth session at Geneva from 7 to 11 May; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held its fifty-seventh session at Bangkok from 19 to 25 April; the Economic Commission for Africa, which holds its sessions on a biennial basis, held the thirty-fourth session of the Commission and the twenty-fifth meeting of its Conference of Ministers at Algiers from 8 to 10 May, preceded by the twentieth meeting of its Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole from 2 to 7 May; and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which also meets on a biennial basis, held its twenty-first session at Beirut from 10 to 11 May, preceded by the twelfth session of its Preparatory Committee from 8 to 9 May. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which meets biennially, did not hold a session in 2001.

* E/2001/100.

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I. Matters calling for action by the Council

1. No resolutions or decisions were submitted for action by the Council.

II. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

A. Economic Commission for Europe

2. At its fifty-sixth session, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) adopted unanimously its annual report covering the period from 6 May 2000 to 11 May 2001. The matters set out below, taken from that report, are brought to the attention of the Council.

Business enterprise and economic growth in the Central Asian and the Caucasian countries: creating a supportive and secure environment

3. The economic theme chosen for debate at the annual session was "Business enterprise and economic growth in the Central Asian and the Caucasian countries: creating a supportive and secure environment". The debate was divided into three sessions, namely, (a) general review of progress and problems in the transition process since 1991; (b) privatization, regulatory reform and enterprise development in Central Asian Republics and Caucasian Republics and (c) living standards and social policy.

4. The Commission expressed its satisfaction with the debate on Central Asia and the South Caucasus, where countries are experiencing serious difficulties in the transition process. It underlined the priority needs of these regions and encouraged the Executive Secretary to strengthen assistance to these countries through regional and subregional cooperation, in cooperation with other international institutions and organizations, and in particular through the work of special programmes and projects for the South Caucasus and Central Asia, with the understanding that appropriate resources should be made available. Support was expressed for the continuation of activities in relation to the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)

ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing: briefing by the German State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

5. The Commission was briefed by the German State Secretary for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth on preparations and expectations for the ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, scheduled to be held in Berlin in September 2002. The Conference offered unique opportunities for member States and civil society to work together to develop those socio-political measures that are necessary to meet the challenges of demographic change. A national and international discussion on ageing was needed and the ECE had made the relevant decision to organize a conference to that end. The Berlin Conference would try to provide a regional implementation scheme for the plan developed by the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Madrid in 2002. An invitation from the German Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth was conveyed to Ministers of ECE member States to attend the Conference in Berlin and to actively participate in the preparatory process.

6. The status of the preparatory process for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, including the organization of an expert meeting in Burgos in September 2001 in preparation for the Berlin Conference, was outlined by the Ambassador of Spain. He appealed to the Commission to consider identifying activities that could be developed within the framework of a regional perspective for this event.

7. The Executive Secretary stressed that the Berlin preparatory process would provide the European region with the opportunity to contribute a meaningful input to the global meeting scheduled to take place in Madrid in 2002.

Environment, energy and transport: strengthening links within the ECE region

8. The Commission felt that, while intersectoral cooperation was very much needed for policy coherence, it did not occur spontaneously but needed planning and stimulation. For such cooperation to be successful, participation on an equal footing and with a right balance was required. The willingness of organizational units participating in intersectoral cooperation would bring value added. Overcoming

sectoral resistance to an intersectoral approach was a long-term process which needed to be carried out in a constructive manner. Partners of all kinds, including the business community and civil society, would promote intersectoral cooperation further.

9. The importance of the role of ECE in promoting regional cooperation on intersectoral issues, given its areas of competence, which are at the heart of key intersectoral issues, as well as its specialized intergovernmental bodies involved in these issues, was underlined.

10. The need was stressed to provide a new impetus to the work on the follow-up to the Vienna and London Conferences by identifying a number of priority issues which, among the areas covered by the Programme of Joint Action and the London Charter, correspond to the key challenges for sustainable transport, environment and health in the ECE region. The decisions and recommendations adopted at the High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health were noted and the relevant principal subsidiary bodies (PSBs) invited to take them into account.

11. The quality of work carried out by all the PSBs within their sectoral areas of expertise was commended and full support expressed for the work already developed on intersectoral issues. PSBs were also invited to further develop intersectoral linkages in various areas, including: (a) border-crossing and trade facilitation work on customs standards and procedures; (b) development of land registration systems and promotion of real estate markets; (c) trade, timber and environment for promoting trade of timber and timber products while ensuring a sustainable management of forests; (d) energy and transport, in particular, environmental performance reviews and ECE environmental conventions as they pertain to the energy and transport sectors; and (e) consolidation of existing ECE databases in a multisectoral framework.

12. The Commission requested PSBs to examine the most efficient, flexible and cost-effective modalities to address intersectoral issues, including joint meetings of the PSBs or their bureaux; creation of a joint group of experts or task force under their auspices; delegation of one member of a PSB to a meeting of another PSB; specific projects jointly implemented and monitored; and the establishment of a web page to facilitate the sharing of information on developments in intersectoral cooperation.

13. PSBs were further requested to review annually the intersectoral cooperation already ongoing and to consider potential new issues for such cooperation subsequently to be brought to the attention of other concerned PSBs, with a decision thereon to be taken by the Commission. It was stressed that regular programme review and evaluation, and the timely dissemination of the evaluation results to member States, were critical to maintain ECE's effectiveness.

14. PSBs were encouraged to find new ways to secure the means for implementing intersectoral activities, including setting aside regular resources and seeking extrabudgetary funding for these activities.

The Millennium Declaration: challenges for Europe

15. The Commission held a round-table discussion on the key policy concerns of the Millennium Declaration relevant to the ECE region: peace, security and disarmament, development and poverty eradication, protecting our common environment, human rights, democracy and good governance and protecting the vulnerable. The discussion focused on identifying the most relevant economic and social objectives for ECE member States, on the progress already made and further efforts to achieve these objectives. Follow-up mechanisms to monitor this progress were also considered:

- The Commission, particularly at its annual meetings and seminars, or through ad hoc initiatives, will periodically review progress made towards implementing the Millennium Declaration, as it is invited to do by the General Assembly. In addition, the Commission may wish to occasionally devote one of its seminars to one of the policy concerns of the Millennium Declaration, such as poverty, protecting the vulnerable, environmental protection, and socio-economic aspects of conflict prevention and peace-building;
- The ECE PSBs will be invited to consider what contribution they can make to the implementation process, and how to integrate the Millennium Declaration concerns and objectives into their programmes of work;
- The Executive Bodies of ECE's Environmental Conventions will be invited to report to the Commission on progress made towards

implementation of the objectives of the Millennium Declaration;

- In the framework of the follow-up of the Millennium Declaration, and taking into account General Assembly resolution 45/190 of 21 December 1990, the Commission would consider the possibilities of participation in international efforts in the sphere of elimination of negative consequences of the Chernobyl disaster;

- A dialogue with the relevant stakeholders, i.e., non-governmental organizations, representatives of academia, business community, will be held to raise awareness and promote public-private partnership in support for the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration;

- Through inter-agency cooperation at the regional level, the ECE will promote coordinated initiatives for joint follow-up to the Millennium Declaration;

- By comparing national experiences and disseminating best practices in monitoring the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, implementation of these commitments will be facilitated, including through development of establishing guidelines on the economic dimension of some of the areas of the Declaration, such as governance;

- Information sharing and better communication on the policies undertaken at the national and regional levels for implementing the Millennium Declaration will be promoted, using available tools and technologies with a view to stimulating the effectiveness of the peer dialogue and public awareness. In particular, this could be used to encourage implementation of ECE's legal instruments.

ECE strategic directions

16. The Executive Secretary reported on an informal brainstorming open to all member States that had taken place with the participation of the ECE Bureau, chairpersons of PSBs, the Executive Secretary and ECE Directors, noting that the first topic discussed had been how to meet the growing demands on ECE during a period of zero-growth budget. Various points had been made about how to attract funding, including: that long-term projects were more attractive than requests for funding ad hoc activities; that the private sector was a possible source of financing to be tapped; and that it would be useful to circulate to member States and other potential donor agencies a list of projects for which funding was needed.

17. A suggestion had been made that the Commission might wish to consider the possibility of adopting a decision calling on donor countries to include ECE in their lists of eligible institutions for development assistance funding and that the decision could be further submitted to the Economic and Social Council for endorsement. During the session of the Commission, it was decided to postpone a decision on this matter and to discuss it at a future ad hoc informal meeting of the Commission.

18. The second topic considered at the informal meeting was the need to strengthen overall policy coherence and communication in the ECE. It was suggested to establish a Steering Group made up of the ECE Bureau members, the PSB chairpersons, and the Executive Secretary, at which interested member countries could participate. This Group would meet in the context of the annual session of the Commission and discuss and articulate the overall policy and direction, with the results of the discussion to be considered by the Commission.

Matters arising from the work of the subsidiary bodies requiring decision by, or meriting the attention of, the Commission

19. The Commission endorsed the decisions and recommendations adopted at the High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health on 4 May 2001 contained in document E/ECE/1389.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

20. At its fifty-seventh session, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific adopted the resolutions summarized below, which are brought to the attention of the Council.

Resolution 57/1. Regional call for action to fight the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in Asia and the Pacific

21. The Commission welcomed General Assembly resolution 55/13 of 3 November 2000, in which the Assembly decided, inter alia, to convene as a matter of urgency, a special session of the General Assembly from 25 to 27 June 2001 to review and address the problem of HIV/AIDS in all its aspects. It noted that the General Assembly specifically called upon the regional commissions to be involved actively in the preparatory activities and to participate at the highest level in the special session. Having emphasized that the window of opportunity to prevent the wide-scale spread of HIV/AIDS will be closed if interventions are not made in the early stage of the pandemic, the Commission called upon concerned members and associate members in the region:

(a) To secure a regional commitment to enhancing coordination, building and strengthening community, national, regional and international efforts, including cross-border collaboration, to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and address the social and economic impact of the epidemic;

(b) To secure political commitment at the highest and at all levels as well as leadership from development ministries and civil society on the essential features of a successful response to HIV/AIDS;

(c) To encourage the electronic and print media to play an important role in disseminating information on HIV/AIDS, to create awareness among the general public;

(d) To mainstream HIV/AIDS into national economic and social development processes, and to increase government human and financial resources to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic at the country level;

(e) To promote policies that accord priority to preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, encouraging responsible sexual behaviour, reducing the negative impact on individuals, communities and society, supporting harm reduction strategies related to injecting drug use, eliminating sexual exploitation of women, recognizing gender-specific impacts, improving access to affordable care and treatment and scaling up successful interventions, including public/private sector partnerships;

(f) To recognize the rights and aspirations of people living with HIV/AIDS and ensure their full participation in the planning and implementation of national responses to HIV/AIDS, as well as focus attention on reducing the discrimination and stigma related to AIDS;

(g) To promote and ensure the protection of the rights of all children, and strengthen and expand prevention and care programmes for youth, giving special attention to reducing the vulnerability of girls and young women;

(h) To be actively involved in the preparatory activities, and ensure representation at the highest political level at the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS and, with the availability of funds, include in their national delegations to the special session representatives of civil society, including young people's organizations, people living with HIV/AIDS or representatives of their associations and representatives of the private sector.

22. Further, the Commission urged Governments of donor countries and agencies, regional and international financial institutions, international organizations, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector:

(a) To advocate for an expanded response to the epidemic, promote the use of best practices, and make every effort to build enabling environments and support effective interventions in the Asian and Pacific region to prevent the rapid growth of HIV/AIDS;

(b) To strengthen funding support to countries with significant risk factors in the Asian and Pacific region in their efforts to combat HIV/AIDS;

(c) To improve the mobilization of technical and financial resources for accelerating access to care and support, including strategies to enhance significantly the provision and affordability of drugs;

(d) To strengthen the global access to drug programmes, under the aegis of the United Nations system, and to seek support, as necessary, from other relevant international organizations, to enhance access to antiretroviral drugs at affordable prices in Asia and the Pacific;

(e) To support South-South and North-South cooperation among countries of the Asian and Pacific region as an integral response to building effective national AIDS programmes;

(f) To set up a mechanism for mobilization of funds from private and public sources for the establishment of a global AIDS fund to finance, inter alia, prevention, care, treatment and support activities in Asia and the Pacific.

23. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary:

(a) To strengthen the United Nations regional coordination mechanism, under the aegis of ESCAP, and together with the joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS, promote accelerated action, including increased political engagement at the highest level, and provide full support to the United Nations regional coordination mechanism thematic Working Group on HIV/AIDS and intergovernmental working groups on HIV/AIDS;

(b) To acknowledge the recommendation by the Secretary-General in his statement to the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations that new infections in young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years be reduced by 25 per cent by the year 2010 by supporting member Governments in expanding and accelerating HIV/AIDS programmes among youth, particularly focusing on life-skills training and human resources development programmes to enhance the capacity of social service and health providers;

(c) To support a wide range of HIV/AIDS prevention programmes for all vulnerable groups, especially youth, and including injecting-drug users, men with multiple partners, indigenous populations, and sexually exploited and sexually abused women and children;

(d) To encourage members and associate members to promote intercountry and cross-border action to mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS among mobile and other vulnerable populations, including refugees, internally displaced people, migrant and transient workers, seafarers, truck drivers and students;

(e) To encourage the efforts of members and associate members to implement multisectoral approaches to address HIV/AIDS;

(f) To promote human resources development efforts in public education, and legal measures and psychosocial support mechanisms to eliminate stigma and discrimination;

(g) To develop new prevention strategies to reach those members of the general population who engage in casual sex, particularly young people who are sexually active;

(h) To continue to recognize HIV/AIDS as a major concern for the Commission, by reporting to it annually on the progress of efforts arising from the implementation of the present resolution.

24. The Commission also requested the Executive Secretary:

(a) To seek extrabudgetary resources, where appropriate, to provide technical assistance and other means of support for efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in countries and areas of the ESCAP region, particularly the developing and least developed among them;

(b) To bring the present resolution to the attention of the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, as a basis for the preparation of the draft declaration of commitment and other preparatory activities related to the special session, with a view to presenting issues of concern and mobilizing support for the Asian and Pacific region.

Resolution 57/2. Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

25. The Commission welcomed with great satisfaction the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific 2000, including the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000; the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 2001-2005; the Regional Message for the 10-year Review of the Implementation of the Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; and the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment, and called for their early implementation. It requested all members and associate members of ESCAP to participate actively in the implementation of the recommendations of the ministerial conference by ensuring formulation of

programmes to implement the Regional Action Programme, 2001-2005, at the local, national and regional levels. It was acknowledged that the major responsibility for the implementation of the Regional Action Programme lies with national Governments, individually and collectively. The Commission encouraged the local governments to participate actively in the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment, including the establishment of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network for a Clean Environment. The Commission also requested members and associate members to provide information on the state of implementation of the programmes and activities recommended by the ministerial conference for appropriate review by the secretariat. Further it requested the Executive Secretary:

(a) To mobilize both human and financial resources as much as possible for the implementation of the recommendations of the ministerial conference;

(b) To ensure effective coordination and joint pursuit of the activities of all concerned United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the ministerial conference;

(c) To encourage the active participation of all stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, research and academic societies, the private sector, local communities, and youth and women's groups, in different phases and aspects of the implementation of the recommendations of the ministerial conference;

(d) To include in the agenda of the fourth session of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development, to be held in 2002, a mid-term review and assessment of the progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the ministerial conference, and to report to the Commission at its fifty-ninth session, as well as to conduct yearly reviews at the Committee sessions, as necessary.

Resolution 57/3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

26. The Commission, having noted the outcomes of the General Assembly resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women, peace and security, reaffirmed the commitment and important role of the Commission in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the recommendations of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and requested the Executive Secretary:

(a) To continue to support members and associate members in implementing the recommendations of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the outcome of the Expert Group Meeting to Strategize on the Regional Implementation of the Outcome Document of the Global Review of the Beijing Platform for Action;

(b) To continue to promote coordinated and integrated follow-up and implementation of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, specifically to build up a database of all programmes and projects carried out in the Asian and Pacific region by agencies or organizations of the United Nations system, which would be updated regularly, and to facilitate the dissemination of those projects and programmes, as well as the evaluation of their impact on the empowerment of women through the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, as requested in General Assembly resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000;

(c) To report to the Commission at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

27. The Commission also requested the Executive Secretary to assist members and associate members:

(a) To promote measures to alleviate the feminization of poverty by eliminating barriers to access economic opportunities, by enhancing capabilities and human capital, addressing issues related to the security and vulnerability of the poor and promoting the empowerment of women in poverty;

(b) To support women in the globalization process by conducting research studies to improve the understanding of the precise impact of globalization on women and promoting measures to equip women to meet the challenges as well as address the vulnerabilities of women through appropriate social safety nets and social protection schemes;

(c) To promote women's rights as human rights as advocated in the Beijing Platform for Action and, in this regard, to assist members and associate members which are States Parties to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women to implement the Convention;

(d) To develop mechanisms and plans of action to combat violence against women and trafficking in women and children, namely, to implement follow-up activities to the Bangkok Accord and Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Women and the Asian Regional Initiative against Trafficking in Women and Children;

(e) To promote policies and implement measures to address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS in the region;

(f) To commit to peace and development through the implementation of the Hanoi Declaration and the Asian Women's Plan of Action for a Culture of Peace and Sustainable Development adopted at the Regional Conference on Asian Women for a Culture of Peace, held in Hanoi in December 2000, which highlighted the recognition that peace and security are vital for development;

(g) To enhance the role of women in decision-making with a view to promoting transformative leadership and governance that is participatory, transparent and accountable;

(h) To support women to meet the challenges of the new digital economy by enhancing connectivity, access and capacity-building for women in information and communication technologies;

(i) To follow up on Commission resolution 53/2 of 30 April 1997 on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the advancement of women, in which the Commission had supported the holding every two years of a regional meeting of national machineries for the advancement of women in order to strengthen regional mechanisms, as recommended at the Regional Meeting on Strengthening National Machineries for the Advancement of Women, held in Seoul in September 1996;

(j) To promote gender mainstreaming and the integration of gender concerns into the public policy agenda through mechanisms and processes which include gender budgeting, gender auditing, sex-disaggregated data and monitoring and performance indicators.

Resolution 57/4. Regional cooperation in information and communication technologies for development

28. The Commission, having recognized that information and communication technologies (ICT) could play an important role in promoting economic and social development, reiterated that national Governments bore the primary responsibility for the development of their countries. However, it agreed that that the international community should support sound, pro-competition policies, programmes and regulatory environments, and encourage private sector leadership in the field of information technology. The Commission also recognized the potential of regional cooperation to complement national efforts in developing countries and economies in transition, against the backdrop of the growing digital divide and the need to create digital opportunities from the revolution in information technology.

29. Referring to the conclusions and recommendations of ESCAP and Economic and Social Council forums, Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/29 and General Assembly resolution 55/28, as well as international initiatives to bridge the global digital divide and create digital opportunities, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to accord priority to assistance to members and associate members in the region regarding (a) the development of pro-competition policy and regulatory frameworks and capacity-building in connectivity and accessibility, taking into account the special needs of particular civic groups; (b) the exchange of experiences and information regarding information and communication

technologies application and development, including the potential challenges and benefits to economic and social development; (c) market-led efforts to promote infrastructure development and capacity-building, as well as in creative applications of information and communication technologies in education, health, tourism, public safety, ageing, community development, empowerment of women, youth and disadvantaged groups, and income and employment generation; (d) affordable and fair access to information through symmetrically financed digital connections; (e) the establishment of community access centres to support poverty alleviation; (f) access to information by all members of society, regardless of language capabilities, through machine translation services; (g) official statistical information networking, sharing and exchange; (h) monitoring of regional initiatives and progress, identification of challenges and issues regarding readiness for the digital era, and provision of necessary guidance and assistance; (i) the compilation and dissemination of an inventory of online services and electronic commerce best practices and lessons learned; (j) projects to promote regional complementarities in the development and application of online services and electronic commerce through the promotion of trade in hardware, services and software, exchange of specialists and professionals and networking governmental, non-governmental and private sector organizations; (k) the sharing of experiences in the development of frequently used software, using the open-source software development concept to facilitate wide dissemination and use at low cost; (l) the creation of "online communities", linked with national information infrastructure, as well as sharing of experiences in this regard; and (m) the promotion of awareness of the need to create and establish national traditional technologies and knowledge databases and to create a regional traditional knowledge warehouse.

30. The Executive Secretary was further requested to serve as the focal point for high-level regional coordination through regional digital economy forums; to seek extrabudgetary resources, and new and creative initiatives for mobilizing financial and equipment support, including from the private sector as the primary agent for information and communication technologies research, development and diffusion; to strengthen and harness the multidisciplinary potential of the secretariat for the effective implementation of the resolution and for facilitating effective coordination with the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force; to initiate the establishment of strategic alliances at the regional level to include relevant United Nations bodies, regional organizations, private sector organizations and funding agencies, to promote information and communication technologies in the region in a coordinated and synergistic manner; and to prepare a progress report on the implementation of the resolution for submission to the Commission at its fifty-ninth session in 2003.

31. The Commission urged wide support, cooperation and participation in the implementation of the resolution.

Resolution 57/5. Integration of Asian and Pacific developing countries and economies in transition into the international trading system

32. The Commission, considering that globalization is an evolving process accelerated by technological developments and liberalization in trade and investment regimes, recognized that it presents opportunities, challenges and risks. There was a need therefore to manage globalization so as to ensure the full participation of all countries and the universal enjoyment of its benefits, thereby minimizing its associated risks, including the possible continuing exclusion and marginalization of developing countries. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, to further assist developing countries and economies in transition in their attempts at national capacity-building for the negotiation and implementation of multilateral trade agreements by:

(a) Promoting policy advocacy and sharing country experiences so as to enhance understanding of the World Trade Organization issues that are of concern to developing countries and the economies in transition;

(b) Providing advisory services to developing countries and the economies in transition on trade policy reviews;

(c) Providing a comprehensive training programme, under the framework of the World Trade Organization/ESCAP joint programme of training, to enhance the negotiating capacity of government officials and to promote greater understanding of the World Trade Organization agreements;

(d) Providing specialized training, in collaboration with the World Trade Organization and other international organizations, and ad hoc advisory services to facilitate the accession of developing countries and the economies in transition to the World Trade Organization.

Resolution 57/6. Implementation of the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme, Strategies and Implementation Modalities for the Asian and Pacific Region, 2001-2005, in support of the Bali Declaration on Asia-Pacific Perspectives on Energy and Sustainable Development

33. The Commission noted with satisfaction the successful outcome of the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, held in Bali, Indonesia, from 21 to 24 November 2000, which adopted the Bali Declaration on Asia-Pacific Perspectives on Energy and Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme, Strategies and Implementation Modalities for the Asian and Pacific Region, 2001-2005. The Action Programme contains the following areas for action: (a) developing policies to promote energy utilization for poverty alleviation by ensuring energy availability at affordable prices; (b) strengthening planning capacity on sustainable energy development by establishing clear linkages to other sectors; (c) promoting the implementation of a supply- and demand-side energy efficiency programme in the region; (d) promoting the application of renewable and clean energy technologies in the region; (e) promoting and assisting a dedicated global project to create 100 per cent renewable energy in the small island developing States of the region; (f) mobilizing financial resources from traditional sources and the private sector. The Commission further noted that the Bali Declaration and the Sustainable Energy Action Programme stress that international cooperation is necessary to support regional efforts in enhancing national capacity, mobilizing national resources and facilitating technology transfer. The Commission called upon all members and associate members who made commitments as expressed in the Bali Declaration to fulfil those commitments, to undertake appropriate measures at the national level and actively to pursue the implementation of the Action Programme. It further called upon donor Governments and agencies, regional and international financial institutions, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to assist developing countries in enhancing their national capacity, mobilizing resources and facilitating technology transfer as mutually agreed and noted in particular the call to shift from agenda to action as recommended by the high-level regional meeting. It requested the Executive Secretary:

(a) To assist members and associate members in mobilizing human, financial and technical resources for the implementation of the recommendations of the high-level regional meeting, including the Bali Declaration and the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme;

(b) To undertake a comprehensive regional programme to assist countries of the region, particularly the developing countries, in the formulation of effective strategies on the efficient use of energy and the application of renewable and clean energy technologies;

(c) To promote effective coordination of the activities of all relevant United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, as well as private sector organizations, non-governmental organizations and other sections of civil society, in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Bali Declaration and the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme;

(d) To follow closely the outcome of the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and undertake appropriate follow-up action at the regional level in support of the Bali Declaration;

(e) To include in the agenda of the fifth session of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development, to be held in 2003, a mid-term review and assessment of the progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, the Bali Declaration and the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme, and to report on this review to the Commission at its sixtieth session, in 2004.

C. Economic Commission for Africa

34. The Economic Commission for Africa, at its thirty-fourth session, adopted the following resolution and ministerial statement, which are brought to the attention of the Council.

Resolution 837 (XXXIV). Development of the African initiative

The Joint Conference of Ministers,

Recognizing with appreciation the respective initiatives of Presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo and Bouteflika in developing the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP) and that of President Wade in developing the OMEGA Plan,

Recognizing further with appreciation the Compact for African Recovery articulated in compliance with the directive of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, held in Addis Ababa in November 2000,

Recalling that the Heads of State who initiated the MAP and the OMEGA Plan had, at the OAU Summit in Sirte in March 2001, agreed to work towards a single initiative for Africa,

Taking note of the useful discussion and positive contributions by Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Economic Development and Planning at this Joint Conference,

Desiring to assist the political leaders of Africa in their efforts to advance African ownership of visions and strategies for the continent's development,

Having examined the process for developing the African initiative,

1. *Decides* that the development of the MAP and the OMEGA Plan towards a common vision of Africa's future growth and poverty reduction be conducted through a process of consultation involving the technical experts of the MAP and the OMEGA;

2. *Endorses* the holding of the forthcoming Abuja workshop on the MAP and the Dakar workshop on the OMEGA Plan, with the shared objective of advancing into a single initiative;

3. *Requests* the technical experts of the MAP and the OMEGA Plan to actively participate in both workshops;

4. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to assist the technical experts of the MAP and the OMEGA Plan in the process of consolidation, by:

(a) Participating in the preparatory workshops in Abuja and Dakar; and

(b) Convening a meeting shortly thereafter of the experts of the MAP and the OMEGA, bringing in other African institutions and experts as need be, with the aim of arriving at a single programme that reflects the national, subregional and regional dimensions;

5. *Urges* participants at the meeting to ensure that, in elaborating a draft programme of a single African initiative, priority is given to the development of detailed proposals on core priority issues;

6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to present the draft programme of the African initiative to the Heads of State of the initiating countries for their review and approval in advance of the OAU Summit in Lusaka;

7. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to make its resources and expertise available to ensure the success of this process;

8. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Commission to convene the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers of Finance and Economic Development and Planning to examine the most effective ways to help to implement the initiative.

Ministerial Statement

1. We, the Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Economic Development and Planning of Africa, having met in Algiers, Algeria, from 8 to 10 May 2001, at our Joint Conference under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, have reached consensus on a number of critically important issues.

2. We agree on the overall vision for Africa's development: a prosperous continent free of conflict in which all our people can fulfil their potential, that participates effectively in the global economy on an equal footing. We concur on the challenges we face in making that vision a reality. We concur on the fundamentals for faster and more sustained economic growth, convinced that poverty reduction including food security are major priorities. We recognize the requirement to build our development upon a foundation of effective governance, sound macroeconomic management and partnership with a vibrant private sector and civil society.

I. Challenges: the next few years

3. Achieving our goals and vision demands a wide range of actions. We have identified priorities to pursue at the national, subregional and regional levels. The first priorities are the actions that we must ourselves take to improve governance and to build our capacities.

4. Effective governance is the foundation for sustainable development and poverty reduction and improved human well-being. This entails a State that, inter alia, respects the rule of law, ensures peace and stability, and enables full participation of citizens. We particularly underscore the importance of transparent and accountable public management systems. A dialogue on governance in Africa will allow us to share lessons and experiences, identifying capacity needs and best practices.

5. In this regard, we welcome and encourage ECA's work, which provides a rigorous analytical framework for examining and improving governance. We encourage ECA's ongoing work in promoting good governance and other key areas and we look forward to participating in peer reviews.

6. We welcome the urgent attention given to Africa's health crises, noting that a healthy population is an absolute requirement for social and economic development. We recognize the immense challenges posed by HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. We note that the key finding of ECA's African Development Forum 2000 on leadership to meet the challenge of HIV/AIDS is the need to mobilize all sectors. We are pleased that the OAU Abuja Summit held last month endorsed and adopted the Forum's "African Consensus and Plan of Action" on HIV/AIDS.

7. Preventing the transmission of HIV and other communicable diseases and providing care and treatment for those affected, poses far-reaching leadership challenges including strengthening delivery systems. We must mobilize more resources to address health challenges. We note that the Abuja Summit recommended significantly higher national budget allocations for public health. Thus, we welcome the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General to create a Global Fund for HIV/AIDS in the order of $7-10 billion per year and we urge that such funds be provided on a grant basis. We also encourage collaborative efforts by Africa and the private sector to lower the costs of critically important medications to the barest minimum.

8. There are human capacity issues involved in almost all of our development challenges. We note the priority of providing education to our citizens as reinforced by the World Education Forum, held last April in Dakar. Meeting the International Development Goals in education in Africa will require bold and sustained leadership based upon innovative planning and finance.

9. Information and communications technologies (ICT) hold the promise of enormous benefits for our countries' economic and social development. We urge the development of ICT as an integral component of our continent's national and regional development agenda. To this end, we recommend that the necessary economic, institutional, social, legal and fiscal environment be established to boost ICT in our countries. We call upon our international partners to treat ICT as a special priority for Africa's development. Hence, we invite them to consider launching a special initiative to support harnessing of ICT for development as defined in the African Information Society Initiative and updated at the 1999 African Development Forum. We urge that Africa's ICT priorities be specifically addressed by the G-8's Dot Force and the United Nations

Economic and Social Council's information technology initiative, among others.

10. The complex problems of financing development through aid, debt reform and trade, pose a number of pressing issues which we have addressed in this and previous ECA Conferences and which require effective and improved partnership with the international community.

11. Any serious analysis of our development prospects concludes that notwithstanding critical tasks that we must undertake ourselves, making a clear breakthrough to higher growth in most of our countries requires a significant increase in official development assistance. At the same time, we fully recognize that while much has been accomplished with aid, the record of aid effectiveness has been quite mixed. In this context, we call for a fundamental transformation of the aid relationship based on principles of African leadership and ownership of visions and goals for development, stable long-term resource flows, a transformed partnership based on mutual accountability and commitment towards shared development outcomes, and recognition of Africa's diversity.

12. We wish to underscore the importance of the diversity of our economies. There are countries making solid progress towards establishing strong institutional capacities for sustainable development, including a sound macroeconomic foundation, effective governance, and peace and stability. There are also a number of countries which are either mired in conflict or are emerging from conflict. In addition, there are small island and land-locked countries facing challenges in their development. Different policies are required by different countries and, in turn, appropriate responses are needed from the international community to the range of circumstances present in Africa.

13. We recognize the recent evolution of development cooperation based on the diverse circumstances and performance of African countries. First, where countries have established or are well on the way to establishing an enabling environment for sustainable development and poverty reduction, including effective public management systems, they can absorb a full range of enhanced assistance, including budget support and predictable long-term commitments, aimed at achieving major development goals. These countries have the conditions in place to effectively use expanded aid flows. Secondly, where countries are some distance from putting in place these governance and macro-economic fundamentals, concerted internal efforts and focused international support should be able to bring these countries to the point where they can take advantage of a fuller range of development support. Thirdly, those countries emerging from conflict require different strategies and support to enable them to resume the course of development. Support to such countries should be flexible and, in regard to debt arrears, should be generally handled. In this regard, we welcome special mechanisms, such as the Post-Conflict Fund, recently proposed by the World Bank. The objective is to help move all countries as rapidly as possible to the point where they can take advantage of a full range of enhanced assistance.

14. We believe that a more rapid and sustainable exit from debt is imperative. We urge a more rapid implementation of an enhanced and expanded Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. Eighteen African countries have now reached their decision point under the enhanced HIPC framework, but of these, only one has reached its completion point and six more could do so during 2001. We also urge the World Bank and the IMF to provide the necessary technical assistance and policy support to help advance the remaining African HIPC countries to the decision point and expedite those that have reached the decision point to reach their completion point. But we note that the debt situation of a number of non-HIPC countries, including middle-income African countries, is still to be resolved. Realizing that inclusion of these countries in programmes of relief may well require additional resources from the international community, including collateral and guarantees for new bond flotation and partial remission of debts, we urge recognition of the stakes for all of Africa in finding solutions to these problems. We therefore urge the international community and in particular the G-8 to initiate a review of the individual debt problems of these hard-pressed African countries

and to launch a joint process with each one aimed at achieving a sustainable debt position. We also appeal to the international community to augment resources necessary for a responsive HIPC programme and to provide debt relief to other needy countries.

15. We reaffirm our belief that trade will continue to generate essential resources to finance development. We underscore the need to rejuvenate the commodity sector, including by identifying ways and means to regain market share. While we acknowledge the recent European Union commitment to remove duties on "all but arms", we urge all international partners to remove all further barriers to trade — in particular tariff peaks and tariff escalation. Particular urgency is required for the provision of duty-free, quotation-free access for essentially all products originating from low-income African countries. We also call for simplification and harmonization of existing rules of origin to help ensure that African countries benefit from the market opportunities granted, in particular, by value-added production.

16. We agree that Africa's position at both the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and at the Qatar Conference of the World Trade Organization should be to advocate that the next round of trade negotiations should be a "development round". A development round should be based on the principle of fairness to the developing countries and be particularly responsive to the aspirations of African countries. During the Uruguay Round negotiations, the rich countries pursued the interests of their most powerful political constituencies. The weaknesses in the capacity of the poor countries to link their trade issues with their broad and complex development agenda meant that their core interests were not considered for negotiation; nor were they adequately prepared to press the case and obtain more favourable outcomes. The development round must lead to legitimate environmental and labour concerns being implemented fairly and not by capricious unilateral actions. The development round must lead to wide-ranging mechanisms to ensure increased resource flows to poor countries. It should also lead to effective technical assistance to enable the fuller and fairer integration of the poorest countries into the global trading system. To these ends, African countries should have a common position and act together in the next trade round.

17. We also endorse the long-term goal of reducing and ultimately ending dependence upon aid. This requires far more reliance on domestic and foreign private investment, which, in turn, underlines the need for governance reforms and macroeconomic management in many of our countries.

18. Globalization is both a reality and long-term opportunity for Africa. But to take advantage of this opportunity requires an increase in our competitiveness fostered by an expansion of our internal markets. We are committed to accelerating the regionalization of our continent. To this end, we take added national measures to promote interregional linkages in transportation and communications as well as to harmonize our trade regimes.

II. The Compact for African Recovery: Operationalizing the African initiative

19. Because of our shared vision and our shared commitment to face the challenges outlined above, we welcome the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP) led by Presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo and Bouteflika, and the OMEGA Plan proposed by President Wade of Senegal, which were presented in Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, to the African Heads of State and Government. We support the recommendation of our African leaders to work towards a single initiative. We concur that such an initiative should provide an appropriate framework for Africa's development.

20. In this spirit, we have considered the Compact for African Recovery tabled by ECA. We recall that the Eighth Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance held in November 2000, adopted a resolution requesting the Executive Secretary to develop a Compact for Africa's Renewal. We congratulate the ECA for the quality of the document on the Compact for African Recovery, which has been articulated by ECA in response to this request.

We strongly encourage ECA as a facilitating and promoting instrument for the integrated initiative and to continue working with the leaders of this integrated initiative as they continue to develop it.

III. Concluding issues

21. We believe that our Joint Conferences — namely Africa's Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Economic Development and Planning — are useful and appropriate forums for discussion of the agendas ahead of us in the foreseeable future. We have hereby decided that these Conferences should be merged and henceforth should meet annually. Recognizing the importance of a single initiative of African Heads of State, we request the ECA to schedule its next joint conference to examine the most effective way it can be implemented with our help. In this respect, we call upon ECA to undertake the necessary preparations for convening that meeting.

22. We note with satisfaction the Regional Cooperation Framework presented by UNDP which, developed in close cooperation with ECA, will make an important contribution to the achievement of the new vision for Africa.

23. We thank our experts for the excellent job in preparing us for this meeting. We also deeply appreciate the role of the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa for its extensive and effective preparation of the Conference.

24. We very much appreciate the warm hospitality and leadership shown by President Bouteflika and the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria in graciously hosting this Conference.

10 May 2001

D. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

35. The twenty-first session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted a number of resolutions, three of which merit the attention of the Council, along with one recommendation.

Resolution 234 (XXI). Adoption of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq

36. The resolution addresses the adoption of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq and requests the secretariat of ESCWA to give priority attention to the development of an integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq and to facilitation of international commercial and passenger traffic in the region, with a view to benefiting from the increased volume of commercial and tourist exchanges between member countries and countries of the region as well as other regions. The resolution also calls upon member States to ratify the Agreement in order to ensure that it enters into force at the earliest opportunity. The Agreement was unanimously adopted by the 13 members of ESCWA.

Resolution 236 (XXI). Establishment of an ESCWA Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation

37. The resolution establishes a consultative committee composed of experts from public, joint and private sectors and of civil society and from research centres involved with scientific and technological development in member countries. This Consultative Committee would propose ways for integrating and coordinating efforts, aimed at transferring and adapting technology and promoting regional cooperation in the area. It will also advise ESCWA on related priorities in the Commission's programme of work and medium-term plan. The Consultative Committee shall meet biennially, with effect from 2002.

Resolution 237 (XXI). Rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine

38. The resolution requests the Commission to implement activities in consultation with the relevant Palestinian economic institutions and requests the Executive Secretary of ESCWA to raise extrabudgetary resources to finance such activities.

Recommendation on the activities of ESCWA

39. In the report of the session, which was unanimously adopted, the Commission called for focusing ESCWA activities on a limited number of priorities, reducing the number of outputs to serve this purpose and reconsidering the organizational structure accordingly to serve the objective of promoting regional integration of ESCWA countries. A special session might be convened for this purpose if the need arises.